

## Spotlight on Sextortion

### What is sextortion?

Sextortion stands for sexual extortion. It involves the threat of having sexual information, photos or videos shared. It is done to get money, control behaviour or pressure someone for further images. It can be done in a number of ways – social media is all too easy as a way to hook someone in. It might start with a seemingly harmless flirt and chat on social media, dating sites and through someone posing as a ‘friend’. The victim is actively encouraged to remove clothing, share an act on camera or share explicit images – they may be recorded and shared without the victim’s knowledge. The victim may get their contacts hacked, and intimate images shared without consent – this is known as revenge porn.

### Who is at risk?

Sextortion can impact people of any sex or age, children and adults. The schemes used are very convincing and sophisticated and expert criminals may create what looks like a genuine profile.

New data from the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) reveals thousands of images and videos of children as young as three to six who have been groomed and manipulated into sexually abusive activities via webcams and camera devices, whilst parents/carers think they are playing safely on household devices. Read more here [Under sixes manipulated into ‘disturbing’ sexual abuse says IWF](#).

The IWF reports that children aged 11 to 13 continue to appear most frequently in imagery where the abuser was not physically present in the room when the image or video was created – the child may have been unaware that they were being recorded but were persuaded to create the image that was then captured by the perpetrators.

Someone with a health issue such as a mental health issue or learning disability, could be at higher risk, as well as children and young people.

The risks are high. The IWF has issued an alert for [education settings in Scotland](#) due to the growing risks.

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### What is the scale of the issue?

Globally there has been a large increase in reports of children and young people being forced into paying money or meeting another financial demand after an offender has threatened to release nudes or semi-nudes of them.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a charity that has been in existence since 1996, works to end child sexual abuse imagery online. More than **one million webpages** showing at least one, and often many tens, hundreds or thousands of child sexual abuse images and videos have been removed from the internet thanks to their work over the past five years alone.

In the last year, the IWF received 392,665 reports of child sexual abuse imagery, an increase of 5% from the previous year. 275m 652 URLs (webpages) were confirmed as containing child sexual abuse imagery, having links to the imagery of advertising it – each URL could contain thousands of individual child sexual abuse images or videos, capable of being shared across the globe.

The Revenge Porn Helpline received 19,000 reports to its helpline, over double the number of reports compared to the previous year. Sextortion made up 34% of the reports in the year. The Revenge Porn Helpline has removed over 305,000 non-consensually shared intimate images online since its launch in 2015.

### What is the impact?

The impact on people who have been the victim of sextortion can be extreme. Read about two very different experiences and outcomes here.

[Sextortion on Snapchat is not the end of my world, says victim - BBC News.](#)

[Pupils get rare alert over dangers of sextortion - BBC News](#)

A father of a 16-year-old who was blackmailed said 'As parents, we're very good at telling kids what not to do, but maybe not so good at telling them what to do if they do it. I think that's something we really need to take away from this, that you need to give them that information, that if they do step over that line, don't panic'

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### What to do when someone is a victim of sextortion?

There are lots of supports and resources for people to access to deal with being a victim of sextortion and to raise awareness of the issue. The key messages are:

- Do not panic
- Contact the Police – they will take your case seriously.
- Block the person on your phone/device.
- Do not communicate with the person.
- Do not pay any money.
- Change passwords.
- Tell someone you trust.
- Get help to get the images taken down.

### Want to read more about sextortion?

[NCA issues urgent warning about 'sextortion' - National Crime Agency](#)

[Sextortion - Police Scotland](#)

[Sextortion - IWF](#)

### Supports

[Sextortion - Police Scotland](#)

[Self-help guide – Police](#)

[Online safety and advice resources \(iwf.org.uk\)](#) – for everyone

[Sextortion or online blackmail help for young people and children \(iwf.org.uk\)](#)

[Sextortion advice and guidance for adults \(iwf.org.uk\)](#)

[Advice for parents of children who are being 'sextorted' online \(iwf.org.uk\)](#)

[Report Remove | Childline](#)

[Home - Gurls Out Loud](#) – for children and young people

[CEOP Safety Centre](#) – for children and young people

[Revenge Porn Helpline](#) - for people over 18

[Sextortion emails: how to protect yourself - NCSC.GOV.UK](#) – for everyone

[Sextortion - Resources - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)

[Contact Us | Samaritans](#)